

Arizona Department of Veterans' Service Advisory Commission
4141 N. 3rd Street (North S. Herrera Way), Phoenix, AZ 85012

August 8, 2013

MINUTES

Advisory Commissioners

Jeff Olson, Chair
Ron Perkins, Vice Chair
George Cushing
Philip Hanson (via teleconference)
Wayne Krula
Brett Rustand
David Toliver, Sr.

Absent

AZ Department of Veterans' Services (ADVS)

Ted Vogt, ADVS Director
Robert Barnes, Deputy Director
Steve Weintraub, Outreach Coordinator
Katherine Harding, Exec. Asst. to the Director
Judy Smith, Admin. Secretary

Guests

Lonnie Sorrell, Veteran
Ed & Pam Barnes, Veteran and spouse

Call to Order – The meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m. by Chairman Jeff Olson. Mr. Olson asked if there were any corrections to the July minutes. There were none. Commissioner Cushing moved to approve the minutes from the July meeting as presented. Commissioner Toliver seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Introduction and Welcome to Invited guests – Chairman Olson recognized return guest, Veteran Lonnie Sorrell and asked if he had any questions or comments. He had no comments.

Chairman Olson recognized Veteran Ed Barnes and his wife Pam, also return guests. Ed Barnes spoke about the caregiving of veterans of the Vietnam era. He inquired at the VA about getting recognition and monetary compensation for caregivers and the VA told him it was about a 2 year waiting period before starting the process for caregiver recognition/compensation from the VA. He was not satisfied with this answer and wanted to know if the commission or ADVS had any knowledge on this subject.

Chairman Olson recognized Pam Barnes who asked to address the commission on this subject.

Mrs. Barnes said she talked to Tom McKenna of Senator John McCain's office. He was of the understanding that she had filed a claim with the VA and he sent her paperwork regarding how to get her husband's medical records. Her husband has not filed a claim.

Mrs. Barnes spoke with the Vest Valley Veteran Center and was told they are not taking care of Vietnam Veterans with her husband's disability or injury, but are caring for veterans who came out of the service after 2000 and, if she was under stress or needed guidance, they would help her. She said she had worked in a nursing home for 23 years and could care for a veteran.

Mrs. Barnes read a letter she wrote on behalf of her husband, Edward L. Barnes, to Senator John McCain. Her husband served in the U.S. Army from 1959 through 1967. He was

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injured in Vietnam and spent 17 months in Walter Reed Hospital. He was honorably discharged with 100% disability, having lost one eye and suffering other injuries.

After his years in the service he suffered from PTSD and was constantly agitated and was not taking care of his medical needs. He was also withdrawn and would not go to crowded places. He suffered from flashbacks of the war, became combative and at times saw her as the enemy. He became upset when he heard the remark made by Janet Napolitano that 'Veterans were the biggest threats to the U.S'. When his agitation worsened, she took him to the VA Hospital for treatment.

Married to Mr. Barnes for 6 years, Pam has been able to persuade her husband to cut down on smoking and drinking and eat healthier. She makes sure he takes his medications and that he gets to his medical appointments. She helps him in many ways by making sure his appearance is good and that he is showered and shaved and that he eats properly.

Mr. Barnes believes his wife should receive caregiver compensation and they want to know how to accomplish this. Pam Barnes said she was advised by Tom McKenna that the veteran must be totally housebound or bedridden for the caregiver to be compensated.

Ed Barnes is a member of Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) and a member of the 'Cooties'. He was told by friends and associates of caregivers who are receiving compensation and he feels that the care his wife provides should be, and can be, compensated. Mrs. Barnes said she is not looking for anything that is not deserved.

The couple plans to visit a Disabled American Veteran (DAV) office after today's meeting because they had helped her when she needed help to get medical records.

She said Tom McKenna wants to know if ADVS can explain the Special K rating.

Chairman Olson called on Robert Barnes, ADVS Deputy Director, to explain the Special K rating. Mr. Barnes said it is a special monthly compensation rating based on various conditions for a disability rating above and beyond. It can be for losing a limb, loss of an eye, loss of hearing or being bedridden. The Special Monthly Compensation (SMC) rating is based on severity, with very specific criteria.

Chairman Olson said if the Barnes' were meeting with the DAV, it is the best place to go for assistance.

Mrs. Barnes said that during the AVSAC meeting, topics are talked about that she would like to comment on and asked if she and her husband have comments or a suggestion, would they be permitted to voice them? Chairman Olson told her they absolutely would be able to do so; the commission and ADVS are here to answer veterans' questions.

Mrs. Barnes said there are many volunteers in Sun City West, the Sun City area and Sun City Grand. She suggested issuing a flyer advertising for van drivers to gain volunteers, or posting information on the Military Channel. The veterans in Sun City watch the Military Channel and if a notification was listed there, many veterans would see it.

If posters or a sign up form was provided at the Surprise and Phoenix clinics, veterans might volunteer to be van drivers.

The Sun City West area has many veterans who help raise funds for various veteran organizations; *i.e.*, the “Cootie” organization through the VFW and the American Legion who raise money for veterans. Many veterans in Sun City West are motorcyclists and are willing to make rides to raise money.

Commissioner Perkins asked what the term “Cooties” means.

Ed and Pam Barnes explained that it is a service organization, an honor society of the VFW. An invitation to join the Cooties has to be extended by the VFW in order to become a member. The veteran must have participated above the normal line of duty, or done more than is required, to be asked to join. The Cootie Organization works to assist 100% disabled veterans. Ed Barnes is working through the Cooties organization to get things done for 100% disabled veterans.

Chairman Olson said our veteran service organizations are incredibly generous in raising money. Each organization has an honor society within its organization; Cooties is the VFW’s honor society.

Mrs. Barnes asked about the Game & Fish matter that Ed Barnes brought up at the July 11th meeting.

Robert Barnes, Deputy Director, said Mike Klier spoke with the Game & Fish Department and they have acknowledged the issue. They are interested in resolving the matter and will take it to their board of directors; we expect to receive an answer.

Communications – The secretary reported that an e-mail was received from AVSAC Stakeholder, David Engelhardt. He is a volunteer for “The Veterans History Project” through the Tempe Public Library. Local volunteers of the Veterans History Project interview veterans and record their stories on DVD’s for the veterans’ families and the Library of Congress. A volunteer from the Veterans History Project would like to give a short presentation at a future ADVS Advisory Commission meeting as to why the Veterans History Project is so important to our veterans and our country.

Chairman Olson said the Veterans History Project has been around a number of years and inquired if the commission would like Mr. Engelhardt or a member of the Veteran History Project to attend a future Advisory Commission meeting. Commissioner Cushing said the commission owes him the courtesy of a meeting and should extend an invitation.

Steve Weintraub is familiar with a similar organization, the “Veterans Heritage Project”. Because the organizations sound similar, he will call to verify that they are different organizations.

Chairman Olson will contact Mr. Engelhardt and invite him to the September Advisory Commission meeting.

Agency Announcements and Updates – Chairman Olson called upon Director Ted Vogt for agency announcements and updates.

Director Vogt met with Linda Stiles of Arizona Boards and Commissions regarding the vacancies and re-nominations of current Advisory Commission members. She assured Director Vogt that she will work to get the three commissioners re-commissioned who have been waiting and to recruit two new members to the commission. There are 6 or 8 names of interested people on the list with her office.

ADVS sent a letter to veteran service organizations requesting names of interested parties to be sent to the Boards and Commission office for consideration. As a result of that letter, two women and one man contacted ADVS with interest in receiving applications.

Chairman Olson said with the Women's Health Fair coming up, those able to attend can spread the word and may be able to find people who are interested and want to apply.

Commissioner Toliver addressed the matter of vacancies on the Advisory Commission and recruiting women members. He cautioned not to be too strict on requirements, and a demographic to be considered is a woman on the commission. It is very important to consider a woman on the commission if we are going to represent all veterans.

The commission could give a woman the opportunity to be a good commissioner by teaching her, or providing on the job training, as long as that person has an interest and commitment to serve. It doesn't mean the commission should relax the requirements of what they are looking for in a commissioner. The commission needs to give special attention to recruiting members in order to make it representative of all the people it represents

Director Vogt is in agreement with Mr. Toliver and said he would be happy to talk with applicants who are interested in serving on the commission if they have questions before contacting the Boards and Commission office. He would like to see all veterans represented on the commission.

Commissioner Krula said it is important to have Native American representation on the commission and inquired if there was any interest from the Indian Nations. Director Vogt said he will be visiting the Navajo Nation and San Carlos Apache Nation soon and will address this matter with them. He agreed with Mr. Krula that Native American representation on the commission is important.

Director Vogt said planning for the Women's Veteran Wellness Conference to be held August 17th is going well with the Phoenix and Tucson VA Hospitals. The Prescott VA Medical Center will send an observer to see how the conference is planned and implemented so they can join the conference next year.

Commissioner Cushing asked the status of the two Veteran Homes and Cemetery projects.

Director Vogt reported the Phoenix Home's census is at 170-175. The Tucson Veteran Home's census is at 78-79 residents. The final building of the complex will open the week of August 12th.

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The Flagstaff Cemetery project is moving forward with requests for construction bids, which are contingent upon the state receiving the final property deed. ADVS received assurances from the Corps. Of Engineers that there should be no problem in proceeding.

The Cultural and Environmental studies of the land at the Marana Cemetery project were completed; ADVS is awaiting final reports of these studies.

Commissioner Cushing inquired about the road that Pinal County is to provide from the Air Park to the property.

Director Vogt talked with the governor's office concerning the road to the project and the governor's office was to meet with county administration officials. There were discussions about the Regional Transit Authority (RTA) helping to construct the road. We have not heard if this is definite.

Chairman Olson noted that Scott McRoberts of the VA Regional Office, talked about market penetration at the July meeting. In June the market penetration was 7.5% and last month (July) it was 30%. He asked if someone could give clarification on what the number actually means; does it mean the number of veterans in the area who are being seen at the clinic? He believes the number changed too drastically between June and July to be accurate.

Director Vogt said he is unable to answer that question at this time.

Chairman Olson noted that the commission discussed with Scott whether there would be enough van drivers to transport veterans from the Buckeye area to the Surprise clinic when the winter visitors return and the commission asked for a van driver job description. Scott noted the volunteer Disabled American Veterans (DAV) drivers are not paid; only the VA staffers are paid. Scott did provide a job description for paid VA staffers that the chairman will provide to commissioners who want a copy.

Commissioner Cushing said he would like to see the Volunteer Driver Job Description. The VA may get more interest in volunteer drivers if the job description is out there. Chairman Olson will send the job description to all commissioners.

Robert Barnes, Deputy Director, said there are two sets of drivers at the VA hospitals. One is employees of the Federal Government and they provide their own buses and then there are DAV volunteers. All three hospitals; Phoenix, Tucson and Prescott, provide these ride services, making two opportunities to serve as drivers.

Chairman Olson reported what he thinks may be a misunderstanding by an elderly couple who came by his office after visiting the Tucson Veteran Home. They were impressed with the home and wanted to make a resident application. Jeff offered to help them complete the application but they said no, they were told the home was full, so they didn't see a reason to complete an application.

Jeff is concerned they will tell their friends in Green Valley not to apply at the veteran home as they were told it was full. He thinks they may not have heard correctly. Jeff would like to have the matter rectified and that we may need to do something in Green Valley to correct the matter of misunderstanding.

Director Vogt asked Jeff to send him the family's name and contact information so he can contact them.

Mr. Barnes said the couple may have been told the home was full but that doesn't stop them from applying for the waiting list to get into the home. People can still apply for residency; it is never too soon to apply. For purposes of discussion the Tucson Home is full and the waiting list was used to fill the building that was just opened. The administrator identified 30 people from the waiting list to fill the building. The admissions coordinator and administrator review the waiting list periodically and inquire if the applicant's situation or desire to move there has changed.

Commissioner Cushing asked for clarification on the amount of beds occupied at the Tucson Veteran Home. Is it 79 residents or 79% occupancy?

Mr. Barnes said the number as of today is actually 80 residents. There are 10 Medicare A beds that patients rotate in and out of for rehab purposes, *i.e.*, knee and hip operations, which moves the number to 90 when those 10 beds are included.

The Memory Unit (Alzheimer's patients) has 30 beds; there are 20-23 beds occupied at this time.

Commissioner Krula asked, with respect to the 80 residents in Tucson, what portion is in the Alzheimer's Unit and how many beds are dedicated to the Alzheimer's Unit in Phoenix?

Mr. Barnes said the Memory Unit in Phoenix houses 50 residents and the Memory Unit in Tucson houses 30 residents. The patient must be diagnosed with a need for that unit; we don't want to restrict a patient's movements if it is not needed.

Mr. Barnes said Building #3 at the Tucson Home, which is a long-term care unit, has 30 residents. Building #4 is a long term care unit with 28 residents and Building #5, the Memory Care (Alzheimer's unit) has 23 residents. There has been slow growth, but occupancy has picked up.

Mr. Cushing asked what portion is Private Pay and what is Medicare?

Mr. Barnes said private pay is 5; service connected is greater at 30 to 35; Medicare patients make up the difference and Medicare A is 3 to 5 patients.

Steve Weintraub gave an update on Veteran Resource Centers. He noted that Veteran Resource Centers are established at three state schools and have been operating for some time. There were no issues with veteran resource centers at the state schools. He has visited a majority of the community colleges that are independent and not state affiliated, as he promotes the veteran campus program. Some of their student resource centers are better than others. It depends upon the space they are provided by the administration.

General Carl Schneider heads an organization called the Veterans Resource Center (VRC). He, with two other individuals, is in the process of making it a 501 C4 organization in order to officially raise funds from the private sector to enhance veteran resource centers. Ideally,

these would be located at the community colleges. The colleges have the budgets but are not always willing to provide money for these types of things, which are not revenue generators. Steve is giving guidance and oversight on how to get funding from the private sector to assist veteran resource centers at the community colleges. Steve noted that Paradise Valley Community College raises its money through the private sector.

There is talk of having independent veteran resource centers aside from colleges as not everyone has access to a community college, so they want to set up veteran resource centers strategically in the north valley through metropolitan areas.

Chairman Olson inquired about the 501 C4 rating. Most organizations are under a 501 C19. He has found when going to major organizations and corporations for donations they say the rules of their foundation require that they give their money to 501 C3 organizations. Historically, the organizations Jeff is involved in have had difficulty raising money by not having the 501 C3 designation. Jeff is not familiar with the 501 C4 and asked Steve for clarification. Steve also is not familiar with the C4 designation.

Steve said, Ray Torres, a member of the team, owns Torres and Associates, a consulting agency and his part of supporting veterans is his background in the private business sector. His recommendation is to move toward a 501 C4 designation. Mr. Torres will request a meeting with Director Vogt to discuss the plan.

Commissioner Cushing reiterated Jeff's comments that when veteran associations try to raise funds, the first focus is that the organization is restricted to 501 C3 rules. We need to get clarification on the difference between 501 C3 and C4. The corporations are in tune to 501 C3 at the corporate level and can only give to 501 C3 organizations. The commission must be careful when raising funds by asking major corporations what their restrictions are.

Director Vogt clarified that the 501 C4 is similar to 501 C3 in terms of not for profit. The 501 C4 are social advocacies and, unlike C3, a C4 can get involved in political campaigns and causes. They can't advocate for the defeat of an individual, but they can advocate for causes. That is probably why organizations steer away from C4's. With the Supreme Court and Citizens United decision, we have seen C4's sent out.

Chairman Olson said some veteran service organizations at the state and local level get reconstituted under a 501 C3. There are new rules, and some words are changed to say the money will be given away, which happens anyway, and it is happening successfully. Typically, the organizations spend the money they raise on helping veterans. The last project he was involved in saw donations go up 75%.

Commissioner Rustand noted that many 501 C3 organizations are Veteran organizations. He questioned that if they remain at 501 C19 or begin at C3, do they still remain a 501 C4?

Steve said he will take the information to the group he is working with and suggest becoming a 501 C3, which will enhance the opportunity to receive funding and may be the prudent route for his group to go.

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Brett noted that the Student Veteran Association (SVA) is in U of A, ASU and NAU, which are state schools. The SVA is staffing most of the schools; he inquired if ADVS has much participation with the SVA at community colleges?

Steve replied, “yes, we do.” Glendale Community College was recognized earlier this year as SVA Chapter of the Month. It is not difficult to get a membership under SVA. Many community colleges within the Maricopa County Community College district, which is a majority of the 10 colleges, have SVA chapters. There is good representation within in the SVA chapters in Arizona.

Steve met with the Scottsdale Community College veteran’s administrator in charge of veteran programs who wants to become a SVA member. Steve will put her in touch with the SVA president at ASU so he can share best practices and outreach information with her.

Steve noted that the Student Veterans of America National Conference will be held Jan 2-5, 2014 at the Scottsdale Plaza Resort. He met with Executive Director of SVA, Michael Dakduk, and explained to him that ADVS is doing good things in Arizona and we want to be able to promote what the state is doing and share our best practices at the conference.

Mr. Dakduk said it is no coincidence that the conference is being held in Arizona. He wants to work with Steve to promote what the state is doing for veterans, not just for students, but the overall veteran programs, including homelessness. Mr. Dakduk will send invitations to Secretary of Defense Charles Hagel, Secretary of Labor, Thomas Perez, Governor Jan Brewer, ADVS Director Ted Vogt and members of the Advisory Commission to attend the SVA National Conference.

It’s going to be a great opportunity for ADVS to showcase what the state is doing for veterans, including student veterans and there is more to follow. The intent is to have a strong student veteran presence at the conference. Steve will be sending out information to the commissioners about the SVA National Convention as more details become available.

Chairman Olson said Veteran Campuses is something the commission wants to look into further. He inquired if Steve could get a couple of members to attend a future Advisory Commission meeting and give details. The commission could understand them better and they would understand the Advisory Commission’s mission. A collaboration might provide new applications of students who are highly involved and motivated who may want to serve on the commission. These young people are the future for this commission.

Mr. Olson would like it to be clear that the commission would like 15-20 minute in-depth presentations by each organization and not just one person taking up all the speaking time. We want all the visitors to receive equal time to present.

Steve will contact leadership members of NAU, U of A and ASU and extend an invitation to present at the next Advisory Commission meeting and will let them know what the commission is looking for so they can prepare ahead of time. Steve will set some speaking guidelines.

Commissioner Rustand said the SVA is a good organization to collaborate with and it is a good idea for the commission to have them present. The newer generation of veterans is being found there.

The percentage of enrollment of veterans in the Tucson VA is about 30% which is much lower than younger veterans. Younger veterans are being found in colleges and universities, and because of the updated Montgomery and G.I. Bill, thousands of veterans are found in technical and vocational schools, so this will be a great opportunity to hear from members of the SVA.

Chairman Olson said he would like the presenters to talk about what veteran students are experiencing with the student G. I. Bill. Previously, we heard negative things and we want to hear first-hand experiences of veterans who are using the G.I. Bill.

Commissioner Cushing noted that there are many veterans enrolled in vocational schools but we don't hear much of their interaction. Years ago, trade schools were a big thing, as tradesmen needed help because veterans were taking Engineering training and there were fewer people trained in A/C, plumbing and electrical. Because the G.I. Bill now allows veterans to attend vocational schools, we need to reach out to the vocational schools and see what their demographics are and how many veterans are taking classes and do they have any kind of group the veterans can get together with.

We target the big picture but we need to look at veterans who are not going to college and see if they are interested in trades; they need to be represented as well.

Director Vogt said when you delve into the G.I. Bill or Education it is broad and deep. He believes the subject warrants more than 15 minutes of time from each of the three universities and a more extended investigation is needed. He believes a presentation at next month's Advisory commission meeting would be a great beginning.

The issues veterans are facing run very deep; and as the Advisory Commission formulates advice for the governor as to what the policy for the state of Arizona should be, there is a lot of deep thinking to be done and education is just one part of it.

They need to look at how we deliver services to veterans throughout the state and we have been looking at specific veteran clusters around the state. Because of location there are veterans who are underserved. There is a lot of work to be done that the governor could benefit from. Chairman Olson agreed with the director.

Commissioner Krula asked if the director was suggesting that the commission hold a more in-depth meeting focused on the particular issue.

Director Vogt said the above subject and a number of others could be discussed. He noted that he has changed how he conducts departmental staff meetings by holding multiple meetings with a few departments at each meeting and not having all departments represented at one meeting. They discuss important subjects every month and are better able to solve issues.

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He said it is important to stay on top of what is happening currently and to do deep forward thinking by noting where we are now, where we need to go, and what are the impediments we might encounter.

Commissioner Krula inquired that since the Advisory Commission is charged with making recommendations to the governor, it would need sessions like this to germinate the thought process that leads to recommendations and wondered how the commission would accomplish that.

Commissioner Rustand suggested forming sub-committees within the Advisory Commission who would communicate by phone or meet with SVA representatives and report back to the commission on a monthly basis. He believes it is important to reach out to the SVA.

Commissioner Cushing is in agreement with Brett and suggested that one or two commissioners make contact with the three universities and report back to the commission with a single presentation, as opposed to three representatives coming in individually for presentations. Commissioner Rustand agreed with Mr. Cushing.

Steve Weintraub said he is invited to attend a student veteran leadership meeting at NAU in Flagstaff on Friday, August 16th. He asked if there was a particular message the commission would like him to report. NAU asked Steve to give a departmental update of how ADVS is supporting student veterans. Steve would like the commission's permission to discuss some of the topics that were brought up at today's meeting. The commission agreed that he should do so.

Steve said he held a vocational follow up meeting with the HDS Truck Driving Institute, a truck driving school in Arizona. In his second meeting with them he met the regional manager and learned that what they are doing statewide is amazing. In Yuma they have a memorandum of understanding with the Yuma Air Station for providing a 4 week on the job training program to transitioning marines. The marines' tuition assistance money goes directly to the school. HDS has agreements with Schneider, Swift, and Werner Trucking Companies to provide jobs for these newly trained marines and HDS is providing .a great program.,

Part of the four week classroom curriculum is Commercial Driver's License (CDL). Steve suggested creating a separate curriculum for veterans so they are not wasting time on something they already have. Steve will be working with HDS to detail curriculum and find the one they need.

Mr. Cushing said the industry needs qualified truck drivers but experienced truck drivers don't need to go through the extra training. Veterans coming out of the military with a truck driving background is a good thing. There is an advantage to companies to have a veteran who can mentor and teach other veterans.

Steve said HDS is in the process of becoming a state certified veteran supported campus with a 4 week curriculum.

Chairman Olson said shortly after Vietnam there was a migration of trained electricians, plumbers and construction workers from the Midwest to other states because the rules to get

jobs in Midwest states were difficult. They lost highly qualified veterans to more progressive states with higher paying jobs.

Chairman Olson distributed the ADVS Baseline Budget via email to commissioners as a way for the commissioners to think about areas within the department for more in depth thinking and education and possibly forming some sub committees, based on individual commissioner interest level.

Jeff prepared a public relations reporting method so that when the commissioners attend activities and meetings and meet people, they can document information and report back to the commission what people are thinking so it we can better plan its process for the future. All subcommittees would be doing what has already been talked about; developing a thought process not only for future action but for future discussions with the governor and governor's liaison.

If the governor was to ask the chairman what her policy should be on veteran homes, he would reply that they not only serve veterans, they generate a profit and revenue for the state and as George Cushing said, the state needs to build more veteran homes.

The commission could strengthen its bond with the governor's office by sharing and once the two groups understand each other better, they could communicate and work better together, including appointing new commissioners.

Chairman Olson asked for discussion about starting the baseline budget sub-committees.

Commissioner Perkins questioned how the director feels about the commission looking at individual areas of the budget such as Cemeteries, Grants, Military Family Relief Fund and questioned whether the commission would be stepping on toes by looking at individual areas of the budget the director works with.

Director Vogt said the budgets are policy documents and they tell where the state's priorities are within the department. It is helpful as a foundation to let the commission know how the department is allocating funds and that it is focusing where it ought to be. The budget is a method to determine if the agency is positioned optimally to help veterans in Arizona.

Currently, as we look toward the end of Afghan war and the likelihood of an increase in returning troops in next two years, and the declining defense budgets, are we properly situated to meet those needs? There is a lot of research that needs to be done; *i.e.*, how many veterans will be returning to Arizona after the Afghan war ends; will they go to universities or trade schools, or be retiring. That's where the commission's help would be beneficial in answering these questions by letting the agency know what they are seeing and hearing in the community and what the state of Arizona ought to be able to expect. This baseline budget is currently where the agency is focusing its resources.

Commissioner Krula asked Director Vogt to communicate to the chairman the areas he feels would be appropriate for the Advisory Commission to focus on as the chairman appoints committees.

Director Vogt said he would be happy to make recommendations to the commission.

Commissioner Perkins said there is a desire to have more veteran homes, especially in Kingman, as well as a cemetery. Kingman is by itself and away from metropolitan areas. He noted the former director's goal for the agency was to expand those facilities around the state. Veterans deserve more veteran nursing homes around the state, especially Kingman, as well as a veteran cemetery.

Director Vogt said dollars follow policy. The policy and what is adopted, will determine where the dollars flow.

Commissioner Rustand said it is good for the commission to look at the budget but stay at the policy level and not get into the day to day activities.

Brett would particularly like to see a VA staff member present at Advisory Commission meetings because much of the commission's discussions involve VA matters. A lot of what Veterans' Services does makes up for the differences the VA is lacking. A VA representative at meetings would be good with discussion of what they are not doing at the federal level and how ADVS compensates for those inefficiencies at the state level.

Mr. Cushing agreed. The Federal Government is not looking to build new Veteran Homes and cemeteries unless there are federal dollars to do so. A cemetery and Veteran Home are needed in Kingman and Yuma and, unless the state gets federal monies to build them, the reality is, it won't happen.

These matters are policy and dollar driven. In the near future, Arizona could have 750,000 veterans living in Arizona; does that mean the state gets more federal dollars or state money? Probably not, but building another veteran home brings thousands of dollars to the state. Where should we put our emphasis and where should we put a new potential for revenue coming in from that home?

Metroplex areas are the focus for building veteran homes and the outlying areas are somewhat forgotten. Those areas have unique problems that metropolitan areas don't have. Transportation is a huge problem in outlying areas. We need to figure ways to better serve the veterans in outlying communities.

Mr. Cushing remarked that with new 21st Century telemedicine technology, doctors in outlying areas, especially on the reservations, are contacting patients through Skype and taking medical readings from the patient through Skype in their homes, without the patient having to drive miles to a clinic, which is a great way to serve our veterans.

Chairman Olson thanked Mr. Cushing for a very healthy discussion. He noted yet another outcome that can happen when a stronger policy is developed and that is when a governor hears a good policy idea; then realizes it is a federal idea.

If the governor looks at it again and decides to write a resolution to the National Governors Association to have all governors considered as a policy of that association, when the resolution goes to congress or the president, it has significantly more weight if it involves 50 governors.

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Mr. Olson noted that state cemeteries and veteran homes have been underfunded for years. There is a priority list and these fall below other priorities on the list. The stand of most veteran service organizations is that the VA needs to fund them in total because it's good for veterans and good for the state and they can make money.

That message was sent to congress by organizations for a long time but shortly after the National Governor's Association adopted the idea, funding improved significantly. That is an outcome that can happen if we collaborate more.

Chairman Olson offered to partner with the director to get more representation and cooperation from the VA Regional Office and from the VA and veteran liaison of the governor's office.

Director Vogt said the new policy advisor on veteran affairs for the governor's office is Joe Cuffari. Director Vogt met with Mr. Cuffari this week and offered him an invitation to attend today's meeting. Mr. Cuffari is traveling to Tucson today, but said he would like to attend a future Advisory Commission meeting. Director Vogt will follow up and extend the invitation again.

Commissioner Cushing inquired whether the commission should make a formal invitation and provide the dates of the Advisory Commission meetings to Mr. Cuffari. He noted that by his attendance, it would provide good communication between the Advisory Commission and governor's office, as Mr. Cuffari can take issues or points of discussion to the governor's office.

Director Vogt agreed it would be a good thing to do.

Commissioner Krula made a motion for the Chairman to send a formal invitation to Joe Cuffari, the governor's policy advisor on veteran affairs, to attend a future Advisory commission meeting, based upon his schedule. George Cushing seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Barnes suggested looking at the budget other than in dollars and seeing the department's efforts to maximize the federal dollars to best help Arizona's veterans. The agency expends very few dollars for VBC's but the return to the state is enormous. In regard to the veteran homes and cemetery, ADVS is trying to maximize the Federal VA grant procedures and processes to help our veterans.

Everything in the budget is ADVS' way of taking what the federal government offers and putting it to the best use for the state. It is the state maximizing opportunities the federal government is providing.

Brett Rustand suggested exchanging emails back and forth with the chairman. He noted that AVSAC is a policy organization, as opposed to operational, that makes policy recommendations to the governor.

Any subcommittees would be policy based. The commission would see what policy-based issues they can make recommendations for to the governor.

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Student veterans as a top priority would be a good policy to recommend to the governor to help returning veterans get qualified for Commercial Driver's Licenses (CDL's) or student organizations, or how to strengthen VBC's and their ability to help veterans in the VA. These should be policy-based committees as opposed to operational.

Brett made a suggestion that commissioners email the chairman of topics they would like to see the commission act on.

George Cushing concurs with Brett. ADVS is restricted on funds that are provided and does the best it can for the veterans in Arizona. Funds dictate what the agency can do, not policy.

Chairman Olson declared an excellent discussion and will send emails to the commissioners with a list of the committees talked about today and inquire what topics are of interest to each commissioner and their level of interest for each topic.

He questioned if it would be beneficial at future meetings to set aside time for the subcommittees to meet. Members can do a lot by phone but communications and final decisions work best when meeting in person. Holding subcommittee meetings would require changes of how the commission does business, but would not be in violation of the statute.

Director Vogt said he could provide a written update of what is usually covered at the meeting to the commissioners ahead of the meeting. He would need to contact the attorney general's office representative to see if that would be permissible.

Chairman Olson said if the group doesn't make decisions, it is not a violation of the Open Meeting Law. A quorum is not required for a subcommittee and any policy decisions would be put on the agenda for discussion and voting. There would be no violation of the Open Meeting Law.

To facilitate formation of subcommittees, it would be beneficial to Chairman Olson if commissioners would let him know what specific areas of interest they would like to serve. He would like to hear from each of the commissioners of their special interests for the committees they would like to serve on and to send these to Jeff so he can assign specific topics to the commissioners.

Commissioner Cushing said they should read the document and see what committees they would like to serve on. They should give their first, second and third choices to make it easier for the chairman to assign topics.

Commissioner Perkins said it would be beneficial if the commissioners had a list of committees AVSAC would like to have represented so topics could be pinpointed.

Chairman Olson will prepare a list of topics and forward it to the commissioners for them to make choices from.

Outreach Activities for the Commission – Chairman Olson asked if there were any outreach activities to report.

D R A F T –Until officially accepted by the Advisory Commission

Commissioner Krula inquired about the consolidation of geographic areas noting that Yuma has been consolidated with Tucson as a geographic area for the commission. Speaking as a commissioner assigned to the Yuma area, he inquired if there is anything the commissioners should be aware of. It is his understanding the agency is not replacing the retiring manager in Yuma, but the office is still in existence. Commissioner Krula said he and Commissioner Toliver visited the Yuma office when Tom Jones was the manager and they may want to travel to Yuma to meet the new VBC's

Director Vogt said there is no impact on serving the veteran community due to the consolidation of regions. The agency is trying to manage VBC's more effectively. Offices are still positioned around the state so that no veteran is more than an hour away from services. If there is an occasion when a veteran cannot get to the VSD office, the counselor will visit the veteran. In answer to Mr. Krula's question, the agency has two VBC's in Yuma.

Steve said Sergio Sarabia is the newest VBC in Yuma along with Jose Avalos. Sergio has been there since April and is motivated and very veteran proactive.

Commissioner Olson intends to participate in the Veteran Women's Health Fair next weekend. He stopped by the Green Valley CBOC and understood their problem right away. The waiting room is so small there is no room for a table without interrupting patient traffic. He will speak to the building management to see if a table can be put in the outside area where people come in.

Mr. Barnes said the Tucson VA Hospital has been very responsive to being part of the Veteran Women's Health Fair. They will accommodate women veterans with resources all day, beginning at 9 a.m. Mr. Barnes will be in Tucson and Director Vogt will cover the Phoenix VA Hospital.

Commissioner Perkins inquired about the Veterans' Services Outreach Activity Calendar of Events. Counselors provided Northern and Southern calendars. Katherine reported that we have not yet received the Central Region calendar of events. She will forward it to commissioners when it becomes available.

Mr. Perkins noted that Region 2 had been covered by departing commissioners Begay and Sanchez and that region does not currently have commission representation.

Open Discussion for the Good of the Order – There was no discussion for the good of the order.

Chairman Olson called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. A motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Cushing. The motion was seconded by Chairman Olson. The meeting adjourned at 11:50 a.m. The next Advisory Commission meeting will be held September 12, 2013.